DOI:
10.1080/07075332.2013.836120

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

SOLDIERS OF MISFORTUNE: THE ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR, THE BRITISH MERCENARY INTERVENTION AND UK POLICY TOWARDS SOUTHERN AFRICA, 1975-6.[1]

On 11 November 1975 the Portuguese military authorities in Luanda conducted a formal handover of power to mark the end of their country's colonial rule over Angola. This ceremony was held whilst fighters loyal to the *Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola* (MPLA) were defending the capital from their foes, the *Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola* (FNLA) – which was augmented by Zairian troops – and the *Uniao Nacional para Independencia Total de Angola* (UNITA), which was reinforced by a South African Defence Force (SADF) contingent.[2] The MPLA eventually defeated its enemies thanks to the air and sea-lift of arms from the Soviet bloc and also the intervention of a Cuban expeditionary force, although it was unable to achieve a lasting peace in Angola. Thanks to external support (from Morocco, Saudi Arabia, France, South Africa and ultimately the USA) UNITA was able to recover from its defeat in 1975-6, and its struggle against the MPLA lasted beyond the Cold War's end.[3]

The scholarly literature on the Angolan conflict and its external dimensions is extensive, and has benefited both from the limited opening of the Cuban and Russian archives, and also the democratisation of South Africa after 1994. Edward George, Piero Gleijeses and Odd Arne Westad have provided valuable accounts of Cuban and Soviet policy-making on Angola, demonstrating in particular that Fidel Castro's decision to send combat troops to help the MPLA in November 1975 was an autonomous one, which the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev subsequently supported.[4] There is also no shortage of studies on the abortive US covert operation to back the FNLA against the pro-Soviet MPLA (known by its CIA acronym as IAFEATURE),[5]

although the same cannot be said regarding the policies of other states that sponsored factions in the Angolan civil war, in particular France, South Africa, Zaire and China.[6]

Although Norrie MacQueen and Glyn Stone have examined British policy towards the wars of decolonisation in Portugal's African possessions prior to 1974,[7] there have been no studies written on the United Kingdom's response to the Angolan civil war. This gap in the literature may appear irrelevant, given the UK's peripheral role in this conflict, yet this topic is worthy of scholarly attention for the following reasons. Despite the end of empire and the decline of Britain's status as a world power, successive British governments concluded that their country still had important national interests in Africa. The Southern part of the continent was of particular importance because the transition from white minority rule had potential implications for Rhodesia, where the settler community had illegally declared independence in November 1965. Britain had a moral obligation as the former colonial power to resolve the civil war between Ian Smith's regime and the Zimbabwean nationalists, and to oversee the peaceful transition to black majority rule. Yet like the Angolan war the *chimurenga* in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe had a Cold War dimension, because both the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) received military training and arms from the Communist world.[8] A secondary reason concerned the presence of British mercenaries in Angola in early 1976, which generated claims that Britain was covertly backing IAFEATURE, or at the very least colluding with American efforts to recruit UK nationals to fight against the MPLA.[9] Thirdly, the Angolan mercenary scandal reflected on domestic Cold War politics in the UK during the mid-1970s, which were illustrated not only by the fierce debates between the Labour government and Conservative opposition over the course of East-West relations and the nature of *détente*, but also the sense of paranoia that was commonplace within British society regarding the prospects of either subversion by the extreme left, or a right-wing military coup.[10]

The aims of this article are therefore threefold. Using declassified archival evidence, contemporary news sources and secondary literature, this article will describe British policy towards Angola in the immediate context of its decolonisation. It will also examine the impact of the MPLA's victory in 1975 – and its reliance on Cuban and Soviet bloc support – on perceptions within Westminster and Whitehall on both the USSR's foreign policy and the prospects for East-West *détente*, and will seek to determine whether there was any official complicity in the brief, and inglorious, campaign waged by Costas Georgiou ('Colonel Callan') and his compatriots in Northern Angola in January-February 1976.

The historical context:

In March 1961 there was an anti-colonial uprising in Angola which was brutally repressed by the Portuguese military. For the following thirteen years Portugal fought to preserve its rule over its African empire, until the left-leaning officers of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) seized power in Lisbon in a largely bloodless *coup* on 25 April 1974.[11] Five months after the 'Carnation Revolution', the MFA *junta* offered unconditional independence to Portugal's remaining colonial possessions, and in Mozambique and Guinea Bissau it handed over political power to the two main insurgent movements, FRELIMO and the PAIGC. The decolonisation of Angola was complicated by the fact that there were three insurgent parties involved in the conflict – MPLA, FNLA and UNITA – which spent as much, if not more, time fighting each other than they did the Portuguese. Although the MFA brokered the Alvor Accords in January 1975, which committed the three movements and the Portuguese authorities in Luanda to a coalition government until elections were held in October, this peace settlement lasted for just two months. In March 1975 clashes between FNLA and MPLA guerrillas in and around Luanda led to all-out civil war, with

UNITA aligning itself with the former. As the Portuguese lost control of Angola, the warring factions became proxies for external powers. The MPLA received arms from the Soviet bloc and military advisors from Cuba; the FNLA was backed by Zaire and China, and after July 1975 was funded and armed by the CIA; UNITA became a South African client. In response to an FNLA-Zairian advance on Luanda, and the intervention of the SADF in October 1975, Castro ordered the deployment of a task force to defend the MPLA (4 November 1975). Cuba's military intervention, and the air and sea life of Soviet arms supplies to Luanda, proved to be decisive. By January 1976 there were 12,000 Cuban troops in the country, and the South African prime minister Balthazar Johannes Vorster withdrew the SADF and abandoned UNITA. In the same month the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) recognised the MPLA as the legitimate government of an independent Angola, and on 9 February the US president Gerald Ford reluctantly signed the Clark Amendment – which banned the covert funding of Angolan proxies without Congressional approval – into law.[12]

The MPLA's victory did not mark the end of the Angolan civil war, as UNITA was able to continue the fight thanks to external assistance from South Africa and other sponsors. But the defeat of the FNLA, led by Holden Roberto, was shortly followed by its collapse.[13] The FNLA and its Zairian allies were routed by the MPLA and its Cuban advisors at the battle of Quifangondo (10 kilometres East of the capital) on 10 November, and Roberto's army was driven into a headlong retreat to the Zairian border. According to John Stockwell, the chief of the CIA's Angola Task Force, the FNLA leader tried to use his CIA funds to recruit European mercenaries to bolster his forces, which already had a few hundred Portuguese soldiers within their ranks.[14] This proved to be a desperate and ultimately counter-productive expedient, not only because of the poor quality of the personnel involved, but because of the OAU's own revulsion against white mercenaries, which dated from the record of these 'dogs of war' in the former Belgian Congo during the civil wars of the 1960s.[15]

Using CIA funds Roberto recruited at least 230 mercenaries, principally but not exclusively British in nationality, 143 of whom made the journey out to Angola before the FNLA's final collapse.[16] Roberto's emissaries in London established contact with an ex-British Army paratrooper called John Banks, who had set up a mercenary recruitment agency, and a veteran of 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment (1PARA), Nicholas Mervyn Hall. Banks attempted to recruit volunteers to fight against the white separatist regime in Rhodesia, and a several of those initially contacted for this contract ended up fighting in Angola. The mercenaries included a handful of former servicemen in the British Army's elite units (the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment (22SAS) and the Parachute Regiment), but they also included volunteers with no prior military experience.[17]

The first contingent arrived in Northern Angola (via Zaire) in mid-January 1976, at which point the FNLA was in complete disarray. Roberto's incompetence as a military commander, his movement's imminent collapse, and the FNLA's lamentable logistics contributed to the debacle that befell the mercenaries, but their own indiscipline and collective inexperience compounded their problems. Costas Georgiou, another former soldier in 1PARA, was appointed commander of the FNLA's army by Roberto, and he quickly acquired a reputation for brutality towards FNLA fighters and local civilians. Georgiou compounded his atrocities against Angolans by ordering the summary execution of eleven of his compatriots for desertion on 1 February 1976. Three mercenaries escaped from the scene and exposed the massacre to a BBC journalist based in Kinshasa, arousing revulsion amongst the British public and consternation within the Labour government.[18] Georgiou and a handful of mercenaries were subsequently captured by Cuban/MPLA forces, and the rest were driven across the Zairian border as a result of the FNLA's collapse. A second contingent of mercenaries were intercepted by the Metropolitan Police on 4 February before they could leave the UK, and Zaire's president Mobutu Sese Seko announced

that his country would no longer provide a conduit for foreigners fighting in Angola. Georgiou was subjected to a show-trial in Luanda in June-July 1976 (involving nine British and three American defendants), and was condemned to death along with three of his companions. Although the then-UK prime minister James Callaghan appealed to Agostinho Neto, the Angolan president, for clemency, the four were executed by a firing squad on 10 July 1976.[19]

Labour party policy, Portuguese decolonisation and Angola:

From 1961 to 1974 Portugal posed a dilemma to successive British governments which involved an array of strategic, diplomatic and moral considerations. It was a founder member of NATO, a longstanding ally of Britain, and was also (due to the strategic significance of the US air bases on the Azores) a crucial element in the Atlantic Alliance's collective defence. However, there was a stark contrast between the British policy of decolonisation in Africa from the late 1950s, and the imperialist policies of both Antonio Salazar (1932-68) and his successor Marcel Caetano (1968-74), particularly because Portugal's wars in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau aroused the hostility of non-aligned African and Asian states in the UN.[20] Anglo-Portuguese relations were also soured by Lisbon's support for the white supremacist regime in Rhodesia (November 1965), not least because the Portuguese colonial authorities in Mozambique traded with the Rhodesians in defiance of the UN's economic embargo. The Labour government in office from 1964 to 1970 was angered not only by Portugal's refusal to accept the inevitability of decolonisation, but also its implicit obstruction of efforts to force Smith to concede to black majority rule in Rhodesia.[21]

The Labour party's ideology on foreign affairs was influenced by its rejection of imperialism and racism, and its declared commitment to end colonial rule.[22] The hostility of party members to the right-wing dictatorship in power in Lisbon was compounded by reports of

atrocities committed by the Portuguese colonial forces against African civilians, and when Edward Heath's government invited Caetano to the UK in July 1973 the Labour leader, Harold Wilson, vehemently denounced this state visit in a debate in the House of Commons. Whilst Harold Macmillan's government had by the early 1960s recognised that British colonialism in Africa was no longer tenable, Portugal's strategic importance as an ally trumped any qualms that Tory ministers had over Lisbon's imperial policies, which was why Conservative governments tempered any public criticism of Portuguese colonialism.[23]

Opposition to white rule in Southern Africa was one of the few issues which Labour's more radical MPs and its more centrist leadership could agree on, particularly because Cold War-related foreign policy issues – notably the UK's alignment with the USA – tended to divide Labour's left and right. Although more mainstream Labour politicians were wary of the ties African national liberation movements had with the USSR and other Communist states, they were pragmatic enough to recognise that *apartheid*, Rhodesian separatism and Portuguese colonialism were the main sources of regional conflict, and that Western powers had lost influence within black Africa because of their equivocal policies towards the remnants of white rule on the continent. In the Commons on 24 February 1976, the Foreign Office minister of state Roy Hattersley noted that:

> [Time] and time again the Soviet Union has portrayed itself as being on the side of [black nationalism] in Africa. That is not only an enormous condemnation of them, it is also an enormous condemnation of us. We should have made our support for these new nations so obvious and apparent that it would have been impossible for the Soviet Union to compete with us for their friendship and affection.

While Hattersley expressed the Labour front-bench's condemnation of Soviet and Cuban intervention in Angola, he also argued that both Portuguese colonial oppression and the South African military intervention of October 1975 had provided 'fertile soil' for the Communist cause, and that if the West was to win the global 'war of ideas' against the Eastern bloc it had to accommodate itself to Third World nationalism and support the right of black Africans to self-determination.[24]

As the Foreign Secretary during Wilson's final premiership (March 1974-April 1976), one of James Callaghan's priorities was Portugal's 'Carnation Revolution'. Caetano's downfall was followed by a prolonged period of political instability and the rise of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), which developed a strong following within the MFA. These developments occurred concurrently with other crises which threatened the stability of NATO's Mediterranean members – notably the political unrest and terrorist violence affecting Italy; the confrontation between Athens and Ankara arising from the Cypriot *coup d'état* of July 1974, and the ensuing Turkish military intervention; and the collapse of the Greek military junta (23 July 1974).[25] After a year and a half of political infighting and occasional street violence, the Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP) eventually prevailed over its far-left rivals by December 1975, and Western governments' fears of a Communist *coup d'état* in Lisbon never materialised.[26] Nonetheless, at that time the British Chiefs of Staff (COS) and officials within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) were concerned that the emergence of a radical left-wing regime in Portugal – combined with the growing electoral power of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and Greco-Turkish tensions – could weaken NATO's cohesion, to the detriment of Western security interests in the Mediterranean region. Whilst the withdrawal from NATO of a Communist Portugal would have a minimal military effect, it might also have the psychological effect of strengthening far-left political movements within Italy, Greece and Turkey.[27]

As a consequence, the Labour government's policy towards Portugal after April 1974 focussed on supporting democratic socialists in the post-revolutionary struggle for power. This included political consultations with the PSP leader, Mario Soares, and also advice to help his party establish its own trade union.[28] In contrast with the US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, both Wilson and Callaghan concluded that Soares could both thwart the PCP and oversee the democratisation of Portugal,[29] and both men also used their visit to the USSR (February 1975) and the conclusion of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe negotiations in Helsinki (August 1975) to persuade Brezhnev that Soviet meddling in the political struggle in Lisbon would undermine *détente*.[30] Labour's policy also influenced the one overt act of intervention the UK made during the Angolan civil war, which was to send Royal Air Force (RAF) transport aircraft to Luanda to assist the evacuation of Portuguese refugees. Aside from the humanitarian aspects of this action, the Wilson government recognised that the safety of the 300,000 whites in Angola was a latent cause for a right-wing backlash in Portugal, and for potential civil strife.[31] Whilst the effects of British efforts to bolster the PSP are of tangential relevance to this article, it is sufficient to say that the UK's Portuguese policy focused on Portugal rather than its African colonies.[32] Although the Labour government had a tangential interest in Mozambique – particularly as the FRELIMO regime was committed to enforce UN sanctions on Rhodesia – its general policy towards Portuguese decolonisation involved rhetorical support for the MFA's decisions. Angola barely figured in Wilson and Callaghan's discussions with Portugal's new leaders, and there is no evidence to suggest any British partiality towards any of the warring Angolan factions as the Alvor Accords collapsed.[33]

Two other aspects of Labour's foreign policy are relevant here, the first of which would have precluded the UK government's involvement in covert action in Angola. South Africa presented a particular problem for British interests because of both its economic and strategic

importance to the Western world, but also because of its policy of *apartheid*. The Wilson government wanted to develop ties with black African states that had been damaged both by Britain's failure to prevent Rhodesia's secession and also its Conservative predecessor's implicit support for Portuguese colonialism, and in June 1975 it abrogated the defence agreement the UK had with Pretoria which gave the Royal Navy access to the port of Simonstown.[34] Callaghan did visit South Africa five months beforehand, although his main aim in this respect was to encourage Vorster to develop his policy of '*détente*' with black African states, and also to persuade the South African premier to exert pressure on Rhodesia to negotiate with Smith's nationalist opponents.[35] Aside from this visit, the Labour government had minimal diplomatic engagement with Pretoria. Wilson's own contempt for *apartheid* was combined with a suspicion that the South African intelligence service, the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), was spying on him and attempting to destabilise his government. It is therefore highly unlikely that he would have been as ready as Ford and Kissinger were to collaborate with BOSS and the SADF in a secret war in Angola.[36]

The second aspect concerns East-West relations, and in particular the growing divide between Labour and the Conservative opposition over *détente*. During the 1950s and 1960s there had been a cross-party consensus on the requirement to improve diplomatic and commercial relations with the Soviet bloc,[37] but from Heath's premiership (1970-1974) to Margaret Thatcher's rise to party leadership there was a growing conviction amongst the Conservatives that the USSR was exploiting Western goodwill, and was using *détente* to seduce NATO countries into reducing their defences whilst expanding their influence in the Third World.[38] Thatcher saw the Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola in November-January 1976 as a clear sign that Western weakness encouraged Communist expansionism, and in a controversial speech at Kensington Town Hall in January 1976 she described the MPLA's victory as just one aspect of the USSR's policy of world domination, condemning the Labour government for cutting defence expenditure

in the face of the Soviet menace.[39] Whilst Labour ministers publicly criticised Thatcher's strident rhetoric, in private ministers were gravely concerned by the outcome of the Angolan conflict, with the Foreign Secretary instructing the ambassador at Moscow to convey the British government's '[strong objections] to efforts to promote the solution by force of political problems arising in countries far from the Soviet Union's territory'.[40] Subsequent Joint Intelligence Committee assessments on Angola gloomily suggested that the USSR and Cuba could intervene more actively in Southern African conflicts, and envisaged the possibility that Cuban troops could become engaged in the Rhodesian war on the side of ZANU and ZAPU.[41] Labour ministers and Whitehall officials were therefore as concerned as their Conservative counterparts were of indirect Soviet interventionism in Southern Africa; what they could not do was identify a feasible response that the UK could take to counter it.

Angola and the British mercenaries:

A definitive account of the circumstances which led to the recruitment of over two hundred 'dogs of war' by the FNLA is hampered by the scarcity of primary source material – even in the declassified British government archives – and the questionable reliability of the recollections and memoirs provided by the surviving mercenaries.[42] Nonetheless, some tentative conclusions on the organisation of the mercenary plot and the British government's role in it can be drawn.

The UK had been involved in covert action prior to Angola, although in contrast with the CIA the British Secret Intelligence service (SIS) had no paramilitary capability of its own.[43] In successive cases British governments had enlisted either serving military personnel or contracted ex-soldiers in secret wars against hostile governments. In the early phases of the Yemeni civil war (1962-7) SIS had recruited former members of 22SAS and its Territorial Army (TA) battalions

(21SAS and 23SAS) to assist Royalist rebels fighting the Egyptian-backed Republican government.[44] During the early 1970s soldiers from 22SAS serving in Oman trained Mahra tribesmen to conduct cross-border raids into South Yemen; this activity was sanctioned by the Omani and UK governments in reprisal for South Yemeni assistance to the Marxist guerrillas in Dhofar.[45] In both cases the Prime Minister and selected members of his Cabinet were kept informed by SIS (with reference to Yemen) and the COS (with Oman) on the progress of paramilitary operations, providing a discreet and deniable means of controlling them.[46] In contrast, however, the Wilson government was taken by surprise by news reports on the British mercenaries in Angola in late January 1976. The Foreign Secretary was particularly concerned about the effect that their activities would have on relations with African states, as the latter would suspect official complicity in their recruitment by Roberto.[47]

The mercenary scandal had its origins with the former paratrooper John Banks, who had set up a private security firm named 'Security Advisory Services' in May 1975, as part of an abortive attempt to recruit British volunteers to fight alongside Zimbabwean guerrillas in Rhodesia. Five months later the FNLA's British representative, Donald Belford, established contact with four discharged soldiers from 1PARA – Costas Georgiou, Nicholas Hall, Charles Christodolou and Michael Wainhouse. Belford, a former British Army soldier who had worked as a medic with Roberto's forces since 1970, persuaded Georgiou and Hall to travel to Zaire to meet the FNLA leader, and both fought alongside Roberto's troops in Northern Angola in November-December 1975. Roberto apparently developed the idea of recruiting former British soldiers in early January 1976; disgusted with the collapse of morale amongst the Zairian troops Mobutu sent to fight with the FNLA, he was persuaded by Hall that he could buy the services of a battalion's worth of British ex-paratroopers for around US$1m.[48] Roberto's money came indirectly from the CIA, although when Banks and Hall attempted to contact officials within the

US embassy in London they were shown the door, and its diplomats subsequently gave the FCO categorical assurances that its staff had not funded either of the mercenaries.[49]

The background of the recruits also suggests that the contract was an unofficial one. While the Yemen operation had involved a handful of proven former special forces soldiers with good service records (vetted by the founder and Regimental Colonel of the SAS, David Stirling),[50] the Angola mercenaries were a more mixed batch. The MOD's investigations in the spring of 1976 concluded that seventy of the British citizens involved had military backgrounds – seven were serving Army soldiers (five regular and two TA), fifty-eight had been discharged from the Army, two from the Royal Navy, and three from the RAF. Only eleven out of the sixty five former or serving soldiers had served with either 22SAS or its reservist units.[51] Banks, who was based in the UK and provided potential recruits for the FNLA, relied on advertisements in the national press, although 'Security Advisory Services' did also use contacts developed within the armed forces. An investigation by both the civilian and Royal Military Police in February 1976 discovered that a serving soldier within the 3rd Battalion the Parachute Regiment (3PARA) gave Banks the names of thirty former or soon to be discharged members of the regiment; the MOD observed that the soldier involved had committed no breach of military law in the process.[52] Likewise, the two serving TA soldiers (from 55 Signals Squadron, based in Cardiff) were interviewed by their commanding officer, who reported that they had 'entered into this escapade purely out of a spirit of adventure'. Much to the fury of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, William Rodgers, the Army hierarchy concluded that the two reservists could not be disciplined under military law, and approved the commanders decision not to discharge them.[53] The MOD's own investigation showed that 'Security Advisory Services' relied on a combination of personal initiative, press advertisements, and also contacts that the ex-servicemen involved had established with each other whilst on active service.

Furthermore, the mercenaries Banks provided for the FNLA fell well short in numbers and quality of the battalion of airborne veterans Roberto had wished for. Of the 112 recruits in Northern Angola by late January 1976, many lacked applicable military experience (the two ex-Royal Navy sailors were former submariners), and they had been led to believe by Banks that they would conduct non-combatant tasks for the FNLA. Chris Dempster, a former artillery gunner involved in the Angola debacle, stated at the time that the enlistment of men unprepared for the rigours of guerrilla warfare in Africa 'stinks of a Shanghai job'. The fact that the mercenaries ended up under the leadership of men with poor service records also suggests the lack of official sanction. Hall had been dishonourably discharged from the Army for selling arms to Loyalist paramilitaries during his service in Northern Ireland. Georgiou and Wainhouse were convicted for robbing a post office in County Down in February 1972. Georgiou – or 'Tony Callan', to use his *nom de guerre* – was classed by a psychiatrist at his court martial as 'a textbook example of an aggressive psychopath'. Without the constraints of British Army discipline, he and his 'Regimental Sergeant Major' Raymond Copeland indulged in a series of wanton killings in Northern Angola, summarily executing civilians and FNLA soldiers often on a whim. The massacre of eleven fellow Britons at Maquela (1 February 1976) destroyed morale within the mercenary formation, although a former SAS trooper named Peter McAleese did try to restore order amongst the contingent at Roberto's behest. In any case, the numerical preponderance of the MPLA and the Cuban expeditionary force made further operations futile, and by mid-February the surviving Britons had fled to Zaire – leaving thirty-six dead, seven missing and thirteen prisoners behind them.[54]

As far as British official involvement is concerned, John Stockwell specifically recalls in his memoirs that '[the] British refused to help' the CIA with IAFEATURE. Yet several of the mercenaries were able to fly from Heathrow to Kinshasa (via Brussels) in mid and late January without passports, which some sources argue implies that the British intelligence services turned

a blind eye towards their activities.[55] The internal security service, MI5, and the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch had kept 'Security Advisory Services' under observation since the abortive Rhodesian contract in May 1975, although both agencies had a limited interest in Banks or his associates as they were not involved in 'criminal or subversive' activities within the UK itself. At this time both MI5 and Special Branch were committed not only to counter-terrorist duties involving the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland, but were also involved in the surveillance of far-left and far-right political groups which were active at a time of considerable political turmoil within the UK. As a consequence, it is likely that the FNLA's ties with 'Security Advisory Services' were judged a low priority, because they had no implications for domestic security.[56]

The consternation that Wilson and his Ministers demonstrated over Angola suggest that the Labour government did not support either the US or South Africa's covert interventions in the country's civil war. It is also evident that although Whitehall officials were concerned at the outcome of the Angolan crisis, there was a consensus that any embroilment alongside Washington DC and Pretoria would be counterproductive for Western interests. As one Deputy Under-Secretary in the FCO noted, the UK had little choice but to weather the outcome of Portuguese decolonisation in Angola as best as they could:

> The broad thrust of our policy towards Southern Africa since March 1974 has in my view been correct and well-judged in relation to our interests in Africa as a whole. It is a pity indeed that the Americans have been slow to understand the significance of Africa and the bearing which developments there have had on global policy, and that when they did intervene they misjudged the situation. But I suppose that this is in a way a perfectly natural fault on the part of the Republican Party in the United States (just as it is of the Conservative Party in this country). The fact that when the US government decided on semi-overt

> intervenption (sic) in Angola they did so without previous consultation with us or others is typical of their conspiratorial style of diplomacy.[57]

The effect of the mercenary scandal:

The consequences of the Angola debacle can be seen in three distinct areas. First was the inter-departmental dispute within Whitehall over efforts to restrict mercenary activity. The second concerned the impact of the MPLA victory on party politics in Westminster. The third involved Wilson's own personal sense of paranoia during his final months in office, prior to his resignation on 5 April 1976, and his suspicion that elements of the South African, US and British intelligence services were plotting to overthrow his government.

Wilson informed the House of Commons on 10 February 1976 that he would establish a cross-party committee of Privy Counsellors (chaired by the chairman of the Security Commission, Lord Diplock) to investigate the implications of the Angolan affair. The committee presented its conclusions in August, and the Diplock Report stressed that existing legislation – in the form of the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870 – was ill-suited to deal with Britons who volunteered to fight for non-state groups in civil wars or insurgencies. The report's main conclusions were that while British citizens should not be prevented from fighting in overseas wars (mentioning the example of Republican volunteers during the Spanish Civil War in 1936-1939), the advertisement of mercenary contracts and recruiting activities should be made illegal.[58] The report's findings tried to strike a balance between recognising international condemnation of mercenary activities, notably from the OAU, and domestic concerns about civil rights related to freedom of movement. There were also political factors involved which precluded imposing restrictions on Britons seeking to fight abroad. For example, neither Wilson (who was pro-Israeli)

nor Thatcher (whose constituency, Finchley, had a sizeable Jewish electorate) wanted to prevent British Jews from serving with the Israeli Defence Forces, as several had done during the Yom Kippur War of 1973.[59]

Over the following two years officials in an inter-departmental working group struggled with the problem of implementing the Diplock Report's recommendations. Firstly, Article 47 of the Geneva Conventions Protocol I defined one as a foreign fighter who takes a direct part in hostilities, and also received higher pay than locally-recruited soldiers. This did not however apply to any Britons who joined the SADF or the Rhodesian armed forces, all of whom served on the same terms and conditions as white national servicemen, but whose enlistment was as obnoxious to OAU states as the activities of the FNLA's British volunteers.[60] As a consequence, the FCO proposed that specific governments (notably South Africa) should be banned from recruiting in Britain, and drew attention on efforts by African governments to make 'mercenarism' a violation of international law. In both cases, OAU states regarded both the presence of European mercenaries in African conflicts – not to mention volunteers fighting in the Rhodesian and South African militaries – as colonialist ills. On the other hand, the Home Office counselled that efforts to restrict advertising (notably in the media) would be viewed as an affront to press freedom.[61]

The MOD proved to be the main obstacle in implementing the Diplock committee's recommendations. One of its senior officials noted that his department's perspective was that 'the basic premise that the profession of arms is an honourable one', and that it opposed any legislation that could either inhibit recruitment for the British armed forces, or undermine the UK's defence relations with foreign states. MOD officials argued that it was hypocritical to prevent foreign powers from recruiting Britons when Britain's armed forces enlisted Commonwealth and Irish citizens – the department was particularly concerned with any

legislation that could jeopardise recruitment to the Army's Gurkha battalions. Furthermore, poorly-drafted laws could prevent both former servicemen from enlisting with Commonwealth forces, and also the provision of Loan Service Personnel seconded to allied militaries. Oman was cited as a specific example, because British Army and RAF officers had commanded Sultan Qaboos' armed forces during the Dhofar insurgency (1965-76), and continued to serve in command and staff appointments in the conflict's aftermath.[62] As a consequence of the MOD's objections the Diplock Report's recommendations therefore remained unimplemented.

Within parliament there was a general consensus within the Labour party that the Britons fighting with the FNLA were morally beyond the pale. Wilson publicly described 'Security Advisory Services' as 'a small group of small time crooks', whilst David Ennals (Minister of State for Foreign Affairs) told the Commons that his department would confiscate the passports of thirty-eight of the returning mercenaries, stating that 'I cannot imagine that honourable Members on either side of the House would say that it was desirable that British citizens should … become involved in massacres of other British citizens as well as in the destruction of the lives of the Angolan people'.[63] In contrast, Conservative MPs argued that the real scandal in Angola was not the presence of a hundred or so Britons with Roberto's forces, but the intervention of 12,000 Cuban troops equipped with Soviet tanks, artillery and combat aircraft. Winston Churchill (the grandson of the war-time Prime Minister) and Julian Amery (who, as a junior minister under Harold Macmillan and Alec Douglas-Home, had been one of the primary supports of covert intervention in the Yemeni civil war) castigated the government for failing to raise the USSR and Cuba's involvement in Angola with the UN Security Council, and also expressed the Conservative right-wing's view that the Angolan conflict had made a mockery of *détente*. In a Commons debate on 24 February, Amery made the apocalyptic prediction that if the Soviets or Cubans intervened in Rhodesia or South Africa, thousands of white Britons would emigrate to fight for their 'kith and kin', and that '[no] Diplock Committee and no new legislation that the

Government may introduce will stop them'. These verbal clashes in Parliament illustrated both the growing cross-party divide over *détente*, and also the fact that whilst Conservatives viewed the collapse of white rule in Southern Africa from a Cold War perspective, their Labour opponents were more sensitive to the racial implications of Portuguese decolonisation.[64]

The mercenary affair also contributed to the widespread suspicion within the British left that the CIA station based at the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square was involved in subversive activities in the UK, in particular efforts to infiltrate the trade union movement. This sentiment had been fuelled by the Congressional inquiries into post-war US intelligence operations (with the committees chaired by Senator Frank Church and Representative Otis Pike), and also the activities of a disaffected former CIA officer resident in the UK, Philip Agee. Agee had published a memoir of his service's activities in South America, and promised to reveal similar 'dirty tricks' in Western Europe. The CIA station chief in London, Cord Meyer, informed the Director General of MI5, Michael Hanley, that his officers were not involved in clandestine operations in the UK, and the FCO informed Callaghan that the CIA's London station's role was to liaise with its British counterparts in conducting legitimate intelligence operations, namely against the Soviet bloc. Richard Sykes, the FCO's Deputy Under-Secretary (Defence/Intelligence) told the Foreign Secretary that:

> We have never denied the presence of CIA staff in this country, and the former US Ambassador Mr [Elliot] Richardson publicly admitted their presence. But Ministers have taken the general line in responding to [parliamentary questions] that we would initiate an inquiry into CIA activities in Britain only if evidence were produced of inadmissible or illegal activities. We have been confident in sticking to this line because we are as such as we can be that the CIA are not in fact engaged in any improper activities here. Indeed, it would be most damaging to the US-UK intelligence relationship if the CIA were ever found to be

> indulging in activities here without our knowledge and consent. Our relationship is one of mutually valuable confidence and partnership. To put it in no higher terms, the potential damage to US interests were they to behave in this way and be found out, is such that even were they tempted they should refrain. I doubt in fact if they have even felt mildly tempted.[65]

Wilson, however, believed otherwise. Despite Hanley's efforts to reassure him, he became convinced that MI5 were aiding and abetting CIA efforts to spy on British politicians and trade union officials, and also concluded that the Security Service was deliberately turning a blind eye towards South African espionage in the UK. The Angolan affair merely fuelled his suspicions. During a meeting with Senator Church on 16 February 1976, the Prime Minister commented that assurances that the CIA were not involved in covert operations in the UK were in his opinion '98 per cent true', and that 'there might be both CIA and South African money' behind the recruitment of the FNLA's British volunteers.[66]

During the winter and spring of 1976 Wilson was also plagued by conspiracy theories concerning a plot to overthrow him, which reflected more widespread fears about the survival of British democracy at a time of economic turmoil, industrial unrest, and the apparent mobilisation of 'private' armies by former military officers such as General Sir Walter Walker (the former Commander in Chief Allied Forces Northern Europe) and Colonel David Stirling.[67] A series of anti-terrorist alerts in 1974, which had led to the deployment of armed soldiers to Heathrow airport, encouraged rumours that the British Army was preparing for a coup.[68] When the Angola affair broke Bernard Donoughue, who was in charge of the Policy Unit at 10 Downing Street, noted in his diary that the Prime Minister had become 'completely taken up with this issue', and indeed Wilson wrote to the Cabinet Secretary, Sir John Hunt, to express dismay at the 'excessive levity' with which officials had treated the recruitment of British mercenaries. The Prime

Minister was not only appalled by news of atrocities committed by 'Colonel Callan' (notably the Maquela massacre), but also the possibility that their might be domestic security implications.[69]

Wilson appears to have been taken in by some of Banks' boasts about the extent of 'Security Advisory Service' operations, and concluded that the latter had recruited a larger number of volunteers than was actually the case. During a meeting with Rodgers and Ennals on 9 February he rhetorically asked 'how it had been possible for the recruiters to collect 1,500 (sic) mercenaries so quickly', many of whom apparently had either seen service in Northern Ireland or with British special forces, and he wanted assurances that Banks had not been assisted by officials within the MOD. Donoughue noted of this meeting that Wilson 'is genuinely petrified of a right-wing coup in Britain using ex-servicemen as the shock troops', and that '[since] there are few troops based in the UK' extremist conspirators could recruit a sufficient number of ex-soldiers for a *putsch*. Donoughue dismissed these fears as '*Boy's Own* comic stuff', but it is evident that two months before he left 10 Downing Street Wilson seriously envisaged a violent overthrow by right-wing paramilitaries.[70] It is ironic that a band of hired guns who had completely failed to offer a convincing threat to Neto's regime made Wilson fear for his own political survival.

Conclusions:

Without access to SIS's archives it is impossible to make any judgements other than partial ones, but from declassified British government sources it is likely that the recruitment of the FNLA's British mercenaries in late 1975-early 1976 was a product of private initiative, and did not receive official support. The fact that the recruiters and their enlistees had attracted the attention of the police and MI5 is on record, and as such the mercenaries' departure from Heathrow in early January 1976 (despite the fact that some did not possess passports) deserves further study. Yet

otherwise there is no indication of British collusion in US covert action in Angola, and indeed the CIA officer in charge of IAFEATURE, John Stockwell, commented on the lack of SIS support in his memoirs. Britain did have prior involvement in covert operations in the Third World, and four years after the MPLA victory in Angola the SIS provided clandestine backing to the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan, using serving and former UK special forces personnel to train and liaise with the Afghan resistance.[71] Yet in the case discussed in this article, there is no solid evidence to suggest that the British external intelligence service provided meaningful assistance to the FNLA – particularly at a point when the latter was militarily on the verge of defeat. It is also reasonable to expect that had the opposite been true British officials would have recruited a more suitable band of 'soldiers of fortune' than the motley collection assembled by Banks, and would not have allowed a psychopathic incompetent like Costas Georgiou to lead them.[72]

As this article shows, since the 'Carnation Revolution' of April 1974 British officials were concerned with a Communist takeover not in Portugal's colonies, but in the metropole itself, and the Labour government at the time concentrated on offering assistance and advice to enable the PSP to prevail over its far-left rivals. British policy focussed on discreet assistance to Portugal's democratisation, and the UK's approach towards its colonies was to allow the MFA to manage the process of independence. Whilst the Ford administration decided in July 1975 to prevent the MPLA's takeover in Angola, the Labour government recognised that any intervention in the decolonisation struggles in Portugal's African colonies would benefit only the Soviets and their allies, particularly if this involved any collaboration with South Africa; revulsion for the *apartheid* regime provided Labour with an additional reason for not assisting the MPLA's foes. Angola became an issue in UK foreign policy not because of official interest, but because the FNLA had been able to recruit British nationals to fight in its ranks. Had it not been for the contacts Roberto made with Banks, Georgiou and Hall, the Angolan civil war would have attracted far less attention in either Westminster or Whitehall.

As far as Anglo-American relations are concerned, once the MPLA seized and consolidated power with Soviet and Cuban support (January-February 1976) FCO officials emphasised in conversation with their US counterparts that the UK would recognise Neto's regime as legitimate, and expressed the view that the MPLA was a fundamentally nationalist movement which would eventually loosen its ties with Moscow and Havana.[73] It is also worth noting that British contacts with the USA in 1974-5 over Portuguese decolonisation were with the two assistant secretaries of state, Donald Easum and Nathanial Davis. Neither were privy to Kissinger's thinking, and both fell out with the secretary of state over his conduct of African policy – Easum was fired on 28 March 1975 because Kissinger saw him as excessively sympathetic towards black nationalists, whilst Davis resigned from the post nine months later in protest over IAFEATURE. This reflected an enduring problem in Anglo-American relations during Kissinger's role in foreign policy-making under Nixon and Ford, which was his penchant for deliberately limiting the input that State Department officials had in the decision-making process in Washington DC.[74]

Following the MPLA's victory in Angola British officials feared that the ongoing conflict in Rhodesia could inspire overt external intervention from the USSR and Cuba, and also were concerned that South African-occupied Namibia would also become the focus of an East-West clash.[75] The latter fears were confirmed over the following decade by Pretoria's support for a revived UNITA (from 1977 onwards), a series of SADF military raids into Southern Angola directed against Namibian guerrilla bases, and a major confrontation between South African, UNITA, Angolan government and Cuban forces around Cuito Cuanavale in 1987-8.[76] From the UK government's perspective, the Angolan civil war merely demonstrated the need to reconcile the West with African nationalism. Throughout the late 1970s the Labour government sought a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia before the *chimurenga* became the cause either of a Cold War

clash – over a territory in which the UK was still the internationally recognised sovereign authority – or an all-out race war in Southern Africa. Relations with independent Mozambique were particularly important for Britain, not least because the FRELIMO regime provided private assurances that it would not support any overt intervention in Rhodesia by its Communist bloc allies on behalf of ZANU and ZAPU.[77]

In this respect, the Wilson and Callaghan governments demonstrated a pragmatic understanding of the realities of the Cold War in Southern Africa, recognising that black nationalist governments and movements had turned towards the USSR not because they were Moscow's puppets, but because the Soviets and Cuban gained political capital from their opposition to white minority rule. In response, Western powers needed to loosen ties with the South Africans – in spite of their anti-Communist credentials – and to recover their influence by working for a managed transition to majority rule in Namibia, Rhodesia and South Africa itself. This was a policy which attracted fierce criticism from the Conservative right-wing, although it was one which Thatcher herself partially adopted after her election victory in May 1979; most notably with reference to her own government's role in securing Zimbabwe's independence, and the discreet but close relationship Britain developed with Mozambique's nominally Marxist president, Samora Machel, during the early 1980s.[78]

Finally, with reference to Holden Roberto's British mercenaries it is important to recognise that, as Richard Ullman observed, 'there are always men who cannot easily manage the transition back to civil life – or even to a peacetime army – and who yearn for the solace of violence'.[79] Ex-servicemen who adjust poorly to life after a discharge are as likely to enlist to fight in foreign wars, alongside military neophytes seeking the thrills associated with combat or 'Walter Mittys' looking to fulfil their fantasies of heroism. The foreign volunteers who joined the Croatian and Bosnian armed forces during the Yugoslav wars (1991-5) included British citizens,[80]

whilst one former SAS officer, Simon Mann, was imprisoned in Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea (2004-9) for his role in plotting a coup in the latter country.[81] In both Iraq and Afghanistan, 'contractors' employed by poorly-regulated Private Security Companies have killed or injured local civilians because they have been incompetent, trigger-happy or psychotic.[82] It is therefore likely that Britain and other Western countries may again find that a conflict initially judged to be peripheral can become a foreign policy priority because of the actions of another 'Colonel Callan'.

Endnotes:

[1] The analysis, opinions and conclusions expressed or implied in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the JSCSC, the Defence Academy, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) or any other UK government agency.

[2] Fernando Andresen Guimares, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War. Foreign Intervention and Domestic Conflict* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1998). Daniel Spikes, *Angola and the Policy of Intervention: From Local Bush War to Chronic Crisis in Southern Africa* (Jefferson NC: McFarlane & Co 1993).

[3] Abiodun Alao, *Brothers at War: Dissidence and Rebellion in Southern Africa* (London: British Academic Press 1994), 1-43. William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (London: Zed Books 1994). Assis Malaquias, 'Angola: How to Lose a Guerrilla War', in Morten Boas & Kevin C. Dunn (ed.), *African Guerrillas. Raging Against the Machine* (Boulder CL: Lynne Rienner 2007), 199-215.

[4] Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Africa, 1965-1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale* (Abingdon: Routledge 2005). Piero Gleijeses, 'Havana's Policy in Africa, 1959-76: New Evidence from Cuban Archives', & Odd Arne Westad, 'Moscow and the Angolan Crisis, 1974-1976: A New Pattern of Intervention'; both in *Cold War International History Project* (*CWIHP*) *Bulletin* viii-ix (1996-1997), 5-20, 21-37. Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press 2002), 97-159.

[5] For the origins of IAFEATURE, see Gerald Bender, 'Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure', in Rene Lemarchand (ed.), *American Policy in Southern Africa* (Washington DC: University Press of America 1978), 65-143; Jussi Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press (OUP) 2004), 403-424; John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars* (Chicago IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 338-47; & Nathaniel Davis, 'The Angola Decision of 1975: A Personal Memoir', *Foreign Affairs* lvii (1978), 109-24.

[6] Steven F. Jackson provides some analysis of Beijing's policies in 'China's Third World Foreign Policy: The Case of Angola and Mozambique, 1961-93', *The China Quarterly* cxlii (1995), pp.388-422. Francois-Xavier Verschave, *La Francafrique : Le Plus Long Scandale de la République* (Paris: Stock, 1999) does examine aspects of French policy towards Angola after the Cold War. For South African policymaking see Hilton Hamann, *Days of the Generals: The untold story of South Africa's apartheid-era military generals* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2001), 1-45 Francois Jacobus du Toit Spies wrote an Afrikaans history of the SADF intervention, *Operasie Savannah: Angola, 1975-1976* (Pretoria: S. A. Weermag 1989).

[7] Glyn Stone, 'Britain and the Angolan Revolt of 1961', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* xxvii (1999), 109-37; & 'Britain and Portuguese Africa, 1961-1965', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies* xxviii (2000),

169-92. Norrie MacQueen, 'Belated Decolonization and UN Politics against the Backdrop of the Cold War: Portugal, Britain, and Guinea-Bissau's Proclamation of Independence', *Journal of Cold War Studies* viii (2006), 29-56.

[8] ZANU's main source of support came from China and (after 1975) Mozambique. ZAPU – based primarily in Zambia – received arms and training from the USSR and Warsaw Pact states. Paul Moorcraft & Peter McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War: A Military History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword 2008), 73-7.

[9] 'Lawyers blame Britain for fate of mercenaries', *The Times*, 15 June 1976. John Simpson, a BBC journalist who reported on the Angola conflict, makes a similar claim in his memoir *Strange Places, Questionable People* (Basingstoke: Pan 1999), 139. See also Wilfred Burchett & Derek Roebuck, *The Whores of War. Mercenaries Today* (London: Penguin 1977), 41-51.

[10] 'Could Britain be heading for a military takeover?', *The Times*, 5 Aug. 1974. Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997), 184-90.

[11] Douglas Porch, *The Portuguese Armed Forces and the Revolution* (London: Croom Helm 1977).

[12] John Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution: Volumes I and II* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1969 & 1978). Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Policy in the Third World* (Boulder CL: Westview Press 1980). Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution 1994, 2nd edition), 556-93. Bruce Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (CUP) 1984), 147-81. Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (CUP 2005), 207-36.

[13] Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi. A Key to Africa* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1986), 253-326.

[14] John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies. A CIA Story* (London: Andre Deutsch 1978), 182-4, 217-26. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 567-568.

[15] Sarah Percy, *Mercenaries: The History of a Norm in International Relations* (OUP 2007), 185-9. Piero Gleijeses, '"Flee! The White Giants Are Coming!": The United States, the Mercenaries, and the Congo, 1964-1965', *Diplomatic History* xviii (1994), 207-37.

[16] Christopher Sanders (Private Secretary to William Rodgers, Minister of State for the Armed Forces) to Patrick Wright (Private Secretary to Prime Minister), 12 May 1976, Kew, United Kingdom National Archives, DEFE 13/1077. One of the participants, Peter McAleese, lists the names and fates of the 143 mercenaries in his memoir *No Mean Soldier: The Autobiography of a Professional Fighting Man* (London: Orion Press 1993), 263-9.

[17] This account of the mercenary mission is taken from the following sources. Chris Dempster & Dave Tomkins, *Fire Power* (London: Corgi Books 1978).Tony Geraghty, *Guns for Hire. The Inside Story of Freelance Soldiering* (London: Piatkus Books 2008), 49-75. Anthony Mockler, *The New Mercenaries* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson 1985), 156-231.

Peter Tickler, *The Modern Mercenary. Dog of War, or Soldier of Honour?* (Wellingborough: Patrick Stephens 1987), 62-96.

[18] Simpson, *Strange Places*, 149-155. See also Kinshasa to FCO, No.49, 8 Feb. 1976, PREM 16/742. 'I was ordered to shoot Britons, defendant tells Luanda tribunal', *The Times*, 14 June 1976.

[19] 'Angola-bound mercenaries questioned by police', *The Times*, 4 Feb. 1976. James Callaghan (Foreign Secretary) to Dr Agostinho Neto (President of Angola), 28 June 1976, PREM 16/1503. Two Britons (Derek John Barker and Andrew Gordon McKenzie) and a US citizen (Daniel Gearhart) were shot with Georgiou. The remaining US and British prisoners were released in 1982 and 1984 respectively. 'Trial of mercenaries in Angola questioned', *The Times*, 21 Dec. 1976. Prados, *Secret Wars*, 347. 'Angola frees jailed Britons', *The Times*, 28 Feb. 1984.

[20] Stone, 'Britain and the Angolan Revolt'; & Stone, 'Britain and Portuguese Africa', *passim.*

[21] John W. Young, *The Labour Governments 1964-70. Volume 2. International Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003), 181-3.

[22] Stephen Howe, 'Labour and International Affairs', in Duncan Tanner, Pat Thane & Nick Tiratsoo (ed.), *Labour's First Century* (CUP 2000), 120-2. John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (Abingdon: Routledge 2007), 268.

[23] MacQueen, 'Belated Decolonization', pp.39-41. Stone, 'Britain and the Angolan Revolt', 115-6, 125. Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (London: Free Press 2005), 89-92.

[24] *Hansard House of Commons Debates* H.C.Deb 5s, Vol.906 (London: HSMO 1976), 24 Feb. 1976, cols.216-217. The foreign secretary, James Callaghan, had two ministers of state as his subordinates – Hattersley and David Ennals. Hattersley's brief included East-West relations. See Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life* (OUP 1997), pp.411-2.

[25] John C. Campbell, 'The Mediterranean Crisis', *Foreign Affairs* liii (1975), 605-24. Kenneth Maxwell, 'The Thorns of the Portuguese Revolution', *Foreign Affairs* liv (1976), 250-70. Jonathan Story, 'Portugal's Revolution of Carnations: Patterns of Change and Continuity', *International Affairs* lii (1976), 417-33.

[26] Robert Harvey, *Portugal. Birth of a Democracy* (Macmillan 1978). Porch, *Portuguese Armed Forces*, *passim.*

[27] JIC(76)3, *The Outlook for the Southern Flank of NATO*, 29 April 1976; Keith Hamilton & Patrick Salmon (ed.), *Documents on British Policy Overseas III, V: The Southern Flank in Crisis, 1973-1976* (Routledge 2006), 525-33. Hereafter *DBPO III, V*. The JIC report observes that the USA's own backing for the Salazar and Caetano regimes, the Greek military *junta* and General Francisco Franco had fuelled anti-American sentiment in Portugal, Spain and Greece. Edward Peck (head of UK Delegation to NATO) to Sir John Killick (deputy under-secretary of state for Foreign and Commonwealth Office – hereafter FCO), 8 April 1975; & Chiefs of Staff Defence Policy Note 206/25(Final), *A*

Preliminary Assessment of the Military Consequences if Portugal Withdraws from NATO, 26 March 1975, DEFE 11/857.

[28] Conversation between Harold Wilson and Mario Soares (Portuguese foreign minister) at 10 Downing Street, 2 May 1974, *DBPO III, V*, pp.357-60. Conversation between Callaghan and Soares at HM High Commission, Ottawa, 19 June 1974, PREM 16/241. Tom McNally (political advisor to foreign secretary) to Callaghan, 22 Dec. 1975; & minute by P. J. Weston (FCO), *Call on the Prime Minister by Dr Mario Soares*, 22 Dec. 1975, PREM 16/1054.

[29] Morgan, *Callaghan*, 431-433. Mario del Pero, ''Which Chile? Allende?' Henry Kissinger and the Portuguese Revolution', *Cold War History* xi (2011), 625-7. Sir Peter Ramsbotham (HM ambassador at Washington DC) to Callaghan, 9 May 1975, *DPBO III, V*, 440-2.

[30] Ann Lane, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', in Anthony Seldon & Kevin Hickson (ed.), *New Labour, Old Labour. The Wilson and Callaghan Governments, 1974-1979* (Routledge 2004), 162. The effects of this conversation with the Soviet leader are beyond the scope of this article, although should be noted that Brezhnev himself apparently drew a distinction between Portugal – where support for a PCP takeover would damage East-West *détente* – and its former colonies – where support for national liberation was in the USSR's interests. See Vladislav Zubok, 'The Soviet Union and détente of the 1970s', *Cold War History* viii (2008), 427-48.

[31] Weston to Wright, 8 Aug. 1975, PREM 16/1054. JIC(75)17, *The Outlook for Portugal and its Relationship with the Western Alliance*, 26 June 1975, *DBPO III, V*, 453-7.

[32] D. C. Thomas (South-West European Department, FCO) to Killick, 24 Oct. 1974; Killick to N. C. C. Trench (HM ambassador at Lisbon), 5 June 1975; & meeting between Wilson, Callaghan and President Francisco da Costa Gomes at CSCE Summit, Helsinki, 1 Aug. 1975, *DBPO III, V*, 376-82, 390-7, 448-50, 470-5.

[33] Conversation between Callaghan and Soares at 1 Carlton Gardens, 26 May 1974; Conversation between Callaghan and Soares at UK High Commission, Ottawa, 19 June 1974, PREM 16/241. P. J. Barlow (Rhodesia Department, FCO) to S. F. St C. Duncan (HM consul, Lourenco Marques/Maputo), 23 July 1975, FCO 36/1750. Trench to Callaghan, 12 Feb. 1975, *DBPO III, V*, 390-7.

[34] Lane, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', 155-6. Geoffrey Till, 'The Return to Globalism: The Royal Navy East of Suez, 1975-2003', in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *British Naval Strategy East of Suez, 1900-2000. Influences and Actions* (London: Frank Cass 2005), 248.

[35] Lane, 'Foreign and Defence Policy', 164-5. Lusaka High Commission to FCO, No.24, 4 Jan. 1975, PREM 16/634. A. H. Campbell (deputy under secretary for Southern African Affairs) to Sir Antony Duff (head of Africa Department, FCO), 4 Feb. 1976, FCO 7/3131.

[36] Christopher Andrew, *Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (Penguin 2010), 636. Bernard Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary. With Harold Wilson in Number 10* (London: Jonathan Cape 2005), entry for 2 Feb. 1976, 652-3.

[37] Geraint Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War: The Labour Government and East-West Politics, 1964-1970* (Woodbridge: The Royal Historical Society/The Boydell Press 2009).

[38] Geraint Hughes, ''Giving the Russians a bloody nose': Operation *Foot* and Soviet espionage in the United Kingdom, 1964-1971', *Cold War History* vi (2006), 229-49.

[39] Record of a meeting on *détente* held in the FCO on 7 Dec. 1976, *Documents on British Policy Overseas. Volume III. Détente in Europe, 1972-1976* (London: Frank Cass 2001), 466-70. Hereafter *DPBO III*. John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher. Volume One: The Grocer's Daughter* (London: Jonathan Cape 2000), 338-42, 353-7.

[40] See Terence Garvey to Callaghan, 6 Dec. 1975, & Callaghan to Howard Smith (Moscow), 29 Jan. 1976 & 11 March 1976, *DBPOIII*, 421-437.

[41] INT44(76)1, *The Soviet Union and the MPLA: Likely Future Relationship*, 21 Jan. 1976, CAB 190/100. JIC(77)9, *Soviet Policies in Africa*, 21 Nov. 1977, CAB 186/24. JIC(78)2, *The Nature of the Soviet Threat*, 3 March 1978, CAB 186/26.

[42] John Banks in particular emerges as either a confidence trickster or a fantasist, and his memoir – *The Wages of War: The Life of a Modern Mercenary* (London: Leo Cooper 1978) – contains improbable tales about secret operations in East Germany and Vietnam on behalf of the CIA. Banks was subsequently imprisoned in November 1980 for attempting to extort money from a Nicaraguan diplomat (see 'Mercenary 'was told to keep silent'', *The Times*, 19 Nov. 1980. 'Mercenary leader jailed for blackmail attempt', *The Times*, 25 Nov. 1980), and was last heard of in a case involving a Ghanaian businessman accused of drugs smuggling ('Man cleared in Customs heroin 'sting'', *The Independent*, 6 April 1993).

[43] Prados, *Secret Wars*, *passim*. Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray 2002).

[44] Clive Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-1965* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press 2004). Duff Hart Davis, *The War That Never Was* (London: Century Press 2011).

[45] Field Marshal Michael Carver (chief of defence staff) to Peter Carrington (defence secretary), 9 Jan. 1973, DEFE 13/964. Carver to Roy Mason (defence secretary), 6 Jan 1975, DEFE 32/22.

[46] General Kenneth Strong (Director-General intelligence, MOD) to Peter Thorneycroft (defence secretary), *Note of Discussion with Colonel McLean, 20th June 1964*, 2 July 1964, DEFE 13/570. Peter Gilmour (defence secretary) to Edward Heath, 16 Jan. 1972, DEFE 13/964.

[47] Wright to C. J. S. Brearley (Cabinet Office), 29 Jan. 1976; & R. N. Dales (FCO) to Wright, 9 Feb. 1976, PREM 16/742.

[48] Banks, *Wages of War*, 100-1. McAleese, *No Mean Soldier*, 60-3. Dempster & Tomkins, *Fire Power*, 23-45, 60-1, 64, 67, 87-9. Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 164, 215. D. H. J. Hilary (Home Office) to J. D. Bryars, 2 May 1977, CAB 164/1373. 'Jail Soldier Signs Up Army', *The Sunday People*, 18 Jan. 1976.

[49] Memorandum by D. Tomkins (Permanent Under-Secretary's Department (PUSD), FCO), 10 Feb. 1976, PREM 16/742. The PUSD's remit included liaison with the intelligence services.

[50] Hart Davis, *passim.* Alan Hoe, *David Stirling* (London: Little, Brown 1992), 354-89.

[51] Minute by L. G. Walker (MOD), 19 Feb. 1976; & Sanders to Wright, 12 May 1976, DEFE 13/1077. The formal title of the TA (the British equivalent of the US Army National Guard) at this time was the Territorial Army and Volunteer Reserve (TAVR), but for convenience's sake the author uses the better-known name and abbreviation.

[52] Burchett & Roebuck, *Whores of War*, 26-40. Saunders to Wright, 16 Feb. 1976; & note by A. J. Ward (MOD), 13 Feb. 1976, DEFE 13/1077.

[53] Note by Saunders, 24 March 1976; Memorandum by General Sir Peter Hunt (chief of the general staff), 1 April 1976, DEFE 13/1077.

[54] Dempster & Tomkins, *Fire Power*, 84-5, 106-7, 119-20, 141, 157-8, 164, 293, 311-16, 326-45. Geraghty, *Guns for Hire*, 59-61. McAleese, *No Mean Soldier*, 64, 69, 78-84. A. J. Cragg (private secretary to Roy Mason) to Wright, 10 Feb. 1976, DEFE 13/1077.

[55] Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, 183, 191-2. Geraghty, *Guns for Hire*, 68.

[56] Minute by H. Philips (Home Office), 5 Feb. 1976, PREM 16/742. The role of MI5 and the Special Branch in infiltrating extremist groups is covered in the BBC2 documentary *True Spies*, presented by Peter Taylor and broadcast on 27 Oct. and 3 Nov. 2002. See also Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 587-99, 656-69.

[57] Meeting between Ted Rowlands (permanent under-secretary of state for foreign affairs) and Dr Soto Prieto (Cuban ambassador to UK), 28 Jan. 1976, FCO 7/3125. Campbell to Duff, 4 Feb. 1976, FCO 7/3131.

[58] Meeting in Cabinet Room, 9 Feb. 1976, DEFE13/1077. Cmnd 6569, *Report of the Committee of Privy Counsellors Appointed to Inquire into the Recruitment of Mercenaries* (HMSO 1976). Lord Diplock had overseen anti-terrorist legislation in Northern Ireland, which permitted courts to try terrorist suspects without juries. Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War Against the IRA* (London: Bloomsbury 2002), 200.

[59] Percy, *Mercenaries*, pp.197-198. Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary*, 10 Feb. 1976, p.661. Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: HarperCollins 1993), p.692, p.700.

[60] Note by Barlow (Rhodesia Dept), 27 Feb. 1976, FCO 36/1872. M. R. Eaton (FCO) to D. C. Mottram (Cabinet Office), 17 Aug. 1977, CAB 164/1373.

[61] D. H. J. Hilary (Home Office) to J. D. Bryars (Cabinet Office), 2 May 1977; M. A. Holding (West Africa Department, FCO) to Bryars, 3 May 1977, CAB 164/1373. W. K. Prendergast (MOD) to B. Cartledge (10 Downing Street), 30 Dec. 1977, DEFE 24/1759.

[62] T. Cliff (MOD) to Bryars, 1 April 1977, CAB 174/1373. Fred Mulley (defence secretary) to David Owen (foreign secretary), 29 Sept. 1977, DEFE 24/1759.

[63] H.C.Deb5s, Vol.906; Written Answers, 26 Feb. 1976 (HMSO 1976), 286. H.C.Deb5s, Vol.907, *Oral Answers*, 10 March 1976 (HMSO 1976), 409-11. See 'Angola mercenaries recruited by 'small-time crooks'', *The Times*, 11 Feb. 1976.

[64] H.C.Deb5s, Vol.906, cols.201-399. Letter by Winston Churchill (MP), *Role of Mercenaries in Angola*, in *The Times*, 12 Feb. 1976.

[65] Prados, *Secret Wars*, 333-337. Philip Agee, *Inside the Company: A CIA Diary* (Penguin 1976). John Hunt (Cabinet Secretary) to Robert Armstrong (Principal Private Secretary to PM), 17 Dec. 1974, PREM 16/670. Minute by Richard Sykes (FCO) to Callaghan, 30 April 1976, FCO 82/671. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 632. As noted in Sykes to Callaghan, Agee had contacted the Cuban foreign intelligence agency, the DGI, to offer his services, having been rebuffed by the KGB. See Christopher Andrew & Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Allen Lane 1999), 300-5. Sykes was subsequently appointed as ambassador to the Netherlands, and was shot dead by the Provisional IRA on 22 March 1979. 'IRA link in envoy's death', *The Guardian*, 23 March 1979.

[66] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 632-38. Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary*, 2 Feb. & 17 Feb. 1976, pp.652-3, p.669. Conversation between Wilson and Senator Frank Church at 10 Downing St, 16 Feb. 1976, PREM 16/1150.

[67] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 627-43. 'Privately preparing for the worst', *The Times*, 29 July 1974. 'Unison not private army, general says', *The Times*, 10 Aug. 1974. 'General expects three million backers', *The Times*, 28 Aug. 1974.

[68] GEN129(74)3, *Terrorist Threat at Heathrow*, 18 Jan. 1974, CAB 130/636. Strachan, *Politics of the British Army*, 187-9.

[69] Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary*, entry for 9 Feb. 1976, 658-9. Minutes by Wilson to Hunt, 8 Feb. 1976, PREM 16/742.

[70] Mockler, *New Mercenaries*, pp.200-1, pp.222-3. Meeting in Cabinet Room, 9 Feb. 1976, DEFE 13/1077. Minutes by Wilson to Hunt, PREM 16/742. Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary*, entry for 9 Feb. 1976, 659.

[71] Ken Connor, *Ghost Force: The Secret History of the SAS* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1998), 275-9. George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War* (London: Atlantic Books 2007), 199-200. Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations* (London: Fourth Estate 2001), 752.

[72] 'Six mercenaries in Luanda trial reject British barristers', *The Times*, 14 June 1976.

[73] Record of Discussion at State Department between US and British officials, 13 Feb. 1976, FCO 7/3128. Washington DC to FCO, No.794, 4 March 1976, FCO 7/3130. Bridgland, *Savimbi*, 541-7.

[74] Campbell to Duff, FCO 7/3131. Lord Cromer (ambassador at Washington DC) to Alec Douglas-Home (Foreign Secretary), 5 Jan. 1972, FCO 82/176.

[75] Paper by Central and Southern Africa Department (FCO), *The Immediate Outlook in Central and Southern Africa*, 20 Feb. 1976, FCO 7/3129.

[76] George, *Cuban Intervention*, 203-40. Helmoed-Romer Heitman, *War in Angola: The Final South African Phase* (Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing 1990). Timothy J. Stapleton, *A Military History of South Africa: From the Dutch-Khoi Wars to the End of Apartheid* (Santa Monica CA: Security International 2010), 169-86.

[77] Conversation between David Ennals (minister of state for foreign affairs) and Joachim Chissano (Mozambican foreign minister) at Excelsior Hotel, 13 March 1976, FCO 7/3130. Chissano did state that if the SADF intervened on behalf of Rhodesian forces this would be 'very difficult' for his government to accept.

[78] During this period the British provided military training for FRELIMO forces fighting the South African-backed guerrilla movement RENAMO. Alao, *Brothers at War*, 53, 72, 69-74.

[79] Richard Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War. November 1918-February 1920* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1968), 361.

[80] Nir Arielli, 'In Search of Meaning: Foreign Volunteers in the Croatian Armed Forces, 1991-1995', *Contemporary European History* xxi (2012), 1-17.

[81] Adam Roberts, *The Wonga Coup: Simon Mann's Plot to Seize Oil Billions in Africa* (London: Profile Books 2009).

[82] Nadene Ghouri, 'The "trigger happy" foreigners making a killing in Kabul', *The Week*, 5 March 2011. 'Blackwater guards lose bid to appeal charges in Iraqi civilian shooting case', *The Guardian*, 5 June 2012.